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6 December 2011

Dear Jason,

Alliance Rail Holdings (Alliance) Section 17 and Section 18 Applications: Great North Western Railway (GNWR).

Thank you for your responses dated 16 September to consultation on Alliance's West Coast track access applications.

Alliance received a significant number of responses to its recent consultation for WCML access rights, including your own. This letter addresses the specific points you made. We have now written to all consultation respondents in a similar manner.

At the industry stakeholder meeting held in York on 18 August, and in the written responses that followed, a number of people felt it was difficult to understand the reasons for Alliance's applications being split, with one to be made under Section 18 of the Railways Act and one under Section 17. In view of those comments and Alliance's further work with Network Rail we have decided that the formal submission to the ORR will be made as one Section 17 application. This means that there is no longer any interdependence between applications and that issues raised separately during consultation have been consolidated into a single list.

Freight growth

Alliance notes Freightliner's concerns regarding possible demand for freight on this route at some time in the future. If Freightliner believes that there will be future demand on the scale envisaged then Alliance is puzzled as to why alternative proposals have not been progressed. Alliance believes that the correct approach to protect future freight growth is to identify and establish strategic paths. However, I note that on the WCML only six strategic freight paths have been identified in Network Rail's Strategic Capacity Statement for the 2013 timetable, and three of these are for overnight trains with no potential conflict with Alliance paths.

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In developing our indicative timetable Alliance has sought to accommodate the freight paths and only flexed trains within existing contractual limits. Whilst developing our proposals we found a number of freight train paths that were not used, trains operating without rights and trains being operated outside their contractual rights. Clearly there is scope to rationalise the unused paths and rights.

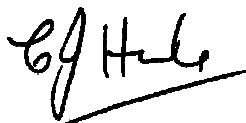
Congested Infrastructure

Freightliner's stated view is that the WCML is 'congested'. Alliance cannot agree with this assertion. Given that Alliance has agreed 31 new validated paths with Network Rail it is clear that some capacity exists, so the route is not congested.

McNulty's 'Value for Money' study has suggested that the industry looks at getting more from the existing assets. Alliance agrees with this and believes more capacity can be found before creating new infrastructure.

You take particular issue with the fact that Alliance did not identify the Trent Valley as being a bottleneck during its development of WCML paths. Whilst I accept that it is not always easy to identify additional paths on the three-track section between Brinklow and Attleborough, I confirm Alliance did not have any significant problems pathing its trains along the Trent Valley against the December 2011 timetable. Indeed it would make a nonsense of the huge investment in four-tracking most of the route if this were the case as Alliance proposes to use the 125 mph Fast Lines wherever possible, leaving the Slow Lines for 100 mph passenger trains and freight.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Hanks
Head of Development